

Dear Sirs,

I have spent several years overseas working for the United States Agency for International Development in countries in transition to democracy. In East Timor, Sri Lanka, and Angola, my colleagues and I have worked hard to promote the freedom and independence of the media as a cornerstone of democracy. In East Timor, USAID was instrumental in the establishment of the national broadcasting board. Media is now playing an important role in the world's newest democracy.

It is therefore extremely disappointing to hear of Sinclair Broadcasting's decision to force their stations to air an anti-Kerry documentary days before the election. This is a clear example of the dangers of media consolidation.

Sinclair uses the public airwaves free of charge, and is obligated by law to serve the public interest. But when large companies control the airwaves, we get more of what's good for the bottom line and less of what we need for our democracy. Instead of something produced at "News Central" far away, it's more important that we see real people from our own communities and more substantive news about issues that matter.

Sinclair's actions show why we need to strengthen media ownership rules, not weaken them. They show why the license renewal process needs to involve more than a returned postcard.

I would like to call on the FCC to strengthen rules regarding media ownership in the interests of protecting our democracy. If we can promote and build free media overseas, we should be able to protect ours at home!

Thank you,  
Edith Bowles